

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

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PRESS RELEASE

RENAISSANCE DRAWINGS FROM THE AMBROSIANA
April 3 - June 16, 1985

Drawings from one of Europe's most distinguished collections, the Ambrosiana in Milan, will go on exhibition at The Cleveland Museum of Art on April 3, 1985. These beautiful works come from the hands of great masters--Leonardo, Raphael, Pisanello, Dürer--and from artists whose names are known only to scholars. The oldest is dated 1370, the "newest" 1630; taken together they represent the flowering of the Renaissance with its ardor for new sensations and facts.

Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564-1631), one of the earliest serious collectors of Renaissance drawings, founded the Ambrosiana in Milan in 1603. Among the most respected libraries in Europe, it has important holdings of manuscripts, paintings, and drawings. The Cardinal's gifts formed the nucleus of the art collection, which has been enlarged by a succession of wealthy patrons, dilettantes, collectors, art dealers, and art historians. From those collections, now numbering more than 12,000 drawings, the present exhibition of eighty-seven superb drawings has been chosen. Most have never been out of Italy or on public view before. They will be at The Cleveland Museum of Art until June 16, 1985.

In the exhibition are some of the finest examples of North Italian draftsmanship, with an emphasis on Lombardy, the region of which Milan is the center. Works from other Italian schools, as well as from Northern Europe, are included. Of the drawings exhibited, the largest number are acutely observed studies, made to satisfy the curiosity of the artist; another sizable group are preparatory studies for specific

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paintings which have been identified; and there are some finished drawings which might equally be considered miniatures or paintings. They are in pen and pigment, colored chalk, or washes of color, on paper or parchment.

Among the major artists exhibited are:

Antonio Pisano, called Pisanello (about 1395-about 1455), active in Verona, Venice, Mantua, Rome, and Naples. An Italian enthusiast of the International Gothic style, he had a sufficiently wide knowledge of Renaissance humanist ideas to incorporate into his work elements based on earlier masters, such as Giotto, and more recent Florentine achievements, such as those of Donatello and Filippi Lippi.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), active in Florence, Milan, and Rome. This genius, who imprinted himself on all his contemporaries and many who followed, is represented by several of his famous "grotesques," drawings which exaggerate human features, bodies, and gestures. They focus on accidents of nature, the other side of what Kenneth Clark called "his untiring search for ideal beauty." These marvels of ugliness are, quite as much as his images of beauty, the result of Leonardo's constant efforts to investigate the variety and contrasts of the world around him.

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), active in Nuremberg. The Ambrosiana is rich in drawings and watercolors by Dürer, one of the few German artists of his time to travel extensively and one of the first to travel to Italy, where he was fascinated by the developments of the Renaissance. He is represented by 11 works, including his famous two-sided "Knight on Horseback."

Other artists include: Boltraffio and Luini, both profoundly influenced by Leonardo; Raphael and the pupil who inherited his workshop, Giulio Romano; Barocci, Sebastiano, the elder Holbein, Tibaldi, the elder Brueghel. In addition to their individual beauty, each drawing reveals something about its creator's artistic concerns and the development of his style, and the exhibition is consequently of particular interest to scholars and connoisseurs.

Two eminent scholars of Renaissance drawings will speak at the Museum during the exhibition in Cleveland. They are Konrad Oberhuber, curator of drawings and professor of fine arts, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, and George Goldner, curator of drawings at the J. Paul Getty Museum. On May 15, Professor Oberhuber will discuss drawings by Raphael and his students. On May 29, Dr. Goldner will talk about the Getty Museum's recent acquisitions of drawings. Both lectures are scheduled on Wednesdays at 5:45 pm and are free and open to the public.

Renaissance Drawings from the Ambrosiana was organized by Louis Jordan, curator of the University of Notre Dame's Medieval Institute, which has a nearly complete photographic record of the Ambrosiana's collections. The exhibition is traveling to four American museums other than Cleveland: The National Gallery in Washington, where it opened; the Snite Museum at Notre Dame; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Kimbell Art Museum. Its final showing will be at the Ambrosiana. The Cleveland showing was supervised by Louise Richards and Hilliard Goldfarb, chief curator and assistant curator, respectively, in the Museum's department of prints and drawings.

A fully-illustrated catalogue of 215 pages is available at the Museum Bookstore. Free lectures, films, and other educational programs will accompany the exhibition.

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For additional information, color slides, or black and white photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.